

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

## I. Status of the Claims

Claims 17 and 19 - 27 are presently pending, with claims 1 - 16, 18 and 28 having been previously canceled. In this Response, the Applicants amend claims 17, 19 and 21. No new matter is introduced. Support for the amendments may be found, for example, in the Applicants' specification at page 3, lines 18 - 27; page 4, lines 2 - 4; p. 16, line 24, with reference to the Applicants' FIG. 6 (C); page 8, lines 11 -13; and page 5, lines 13-15.

## II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103

Claims 17, 19, 24 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by International Patent Publication No. WO 99/01093 to Wierlacher (“Wierlacher”). Claims 20 - 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wierlacher. Claims 26 - 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wierlacher in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,131,736 to Farris *et al.* (“Farris”). The Applicants amend claims 17, 19, and 21 to further clarify the nature of their invention, and respectfully traverse the rejections of claims 17 and 19 - 27 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103.

Wierlacher discloses an interlabial pad that is folded along a longitudinal center line to be worn by a wearer (see, *e.g.*, abstract of Wierlacher). With reference for example to FIG. 2 of

In a Response to the Office Action of October 31, 2007, the Applicants clarified that the fingertip openings of the Applicant's claimed invention are "respectively located at left and right side edges of the interlabial pad, longitudinally positioned near a central area along the longitudinal axis (see, *e.g.*, fingertip insert openings 3, 4 as illustrated in the Applicants' FIGs. 6(A), 6(B) below)",

In the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner states that the Applicants' argument that Wierlacher fails to show the claimed positioning of the fingertip openings relies upon features that are not recited in the rejected claims, "*i.e.*, fingertip openings formed by unbonded portions on left and right side edges of the interlabial pad." The Applicants respectfully disagree, and submit that claim 17, as previously amended in a Response to the October 31, 2007 Office Action, does in fact claim the lateral positioning of the fingertip openings formed by the unbonded portions, reciting:

(underlining added for emphasis).

The Examiner further states that the series of loops disclosed by Wierlacher constitutes loops in succession, which meets the claim limitations associated with the Applicants' unbonded portions.

The Applicants respectfully disagree. The Examiner also states that “because the handling aid [of Wierlacher] stretches across the central region towards the longitudinal side edges of the article, it is reasonable to assume the series of loops would also be oriented across the central region towards the longitudinal side edges” (emphasis added).

The Applicants’ claimed fingertip openings and Wierlacher’s handling aid(s) do not stretch in the same direction. Specifically, each of the pair of the Applicants’ claimed fingertip openings stretches across a peripheral side edge located near a central area along the longitudinal axis, and towards the longitudinal surrounding ends. Wierlacher does not teach that the fingertip openings stretch across a peripheral side edge towards the longitudinal surrounding ends, but rather that they stretch in a perpendicular direction, across the central region and towards the longitudinal side edges (See, e.g., Wierlacher, Figs. 6 - 9). As a consequence of the positional orientation of the Applicants’ claimed fingertip openings, an inserted finger is directed towards the central region and perpendicular to the longitudinal axis. To the contrary, the positional orientation of the fingertip openings (handling aids) taught by Wierlacher directs an inserted finger to extend towards a longitudinal surrounding end and parallel to the longitudinal axis. Thus, the Applicants respectfully submit that the positioning of the claimed fingertip openings is not taught by Wierlacher.

While the Applicants submit that claim 17, as previously amended, recites the lateral positioning of the fingertip openings, the Applicants have further emphasized this feature of the claimed invention by amending independent claim 17 to recite:

17. An interlabial pad having a longitudinal axis and a lateral axis, comprising:
  - an absorbent body for absorbing body fluids;
  - a surface side sheet and a rear surface side sheet enclosing said absorbent body;

a folding guide element along the longitudinal axis provided to form a convex protruding area linearly and continuously over the entire length of the longitudinal axis when the holding sheet member is pinched via the first and second fingertip insert openings.

**CONCLUSION**

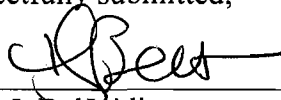
In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below if the Examiner believes any issue can be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment.

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Respectfully submitted,

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